

If the variations were persistent Mendelian characters, and could not be obliterated in the course of breeding, they would still be limited for many generations to a very small circle; and in cases where they did not endow their possessors with a positive advantage in the struggle for life, it is difficult to conceive how the members of this circle could increase so greatly as to drive out of existence the original species. If they were merely small fluctuations, of the type contemplated by Darwinists, they would be even less likely to spread, for reasons which have already been given. The chances of development would be greatly increased were the new characters associated with prepotency in reproductive power, and still more were individuals of the old type losing their fertility and tending towards extinction. Of the inhabitants of England, at the time of the Norman Conquest, a single pair of individuals, endowed with sufficient reproductive prepotency to transmit to their descendants the capacity of doubling themselves in each generation, could have been the ancestors of the whole of the present population—that is to say, could have spread any peculiarities which they possessed to the whole of the English people. But there is no evidence to show that sports are more fertile than normal individuals, or that their appearance marks a general decline of fertility in the species. Accepting evolution as

the origin
of species. but despairing of the
discovery of the
processes by which it has come
about. we may
be tempted to take refuge in the
assumption that
its course was preordained. and may be
likened to
the development of an individual from
its embryonic stage to maturity. Were we
able to
observe only one stage of this
development—an
egg for instance, after so many days
of incubation—